

PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

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Drought leaves 99% of Hawaii dry

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Hawaii agriculture continues to be damaged by an unrelenting drought that has continued into the state's rainy season.

The weekly crop report by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Hawaii office for the week ending Jan. 17 found that 99 percent of the state is in a drought, with more than a third of the state in a severe drought with average rainfall well below typical levels.

Less than an inch of rain has fallen so far this year at 13 of 17 monitoring stations across the Islands. In an average year, cumulative rainfall amounts between 5 and 14 inches is expected by mid-January.

Maui and the Big Island have been especially hard hit by the drought, requiring heavy irrigation to keep crops viable.

North Kohala is the area experiencing the worst of the drought so far this year and is the only part of the state to be described by the USDA as being in an "extreme drought condition." At Laupahoehoe north of Hilo, only 1.7 inches of rain have fallen so far this year; the average is 13.5.

On Oahu, only Waimanalo has received more than an inch of rain so far this year.

Some parts of Hawaii are entering their third year of drought, leading to lower yields for thirsty crops like sugar and forcing water restrictions on Maui and parts of the Big Island.